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ABSTRACT

If museums and libraries are to compete for both public and private funds in an accountability-driven environment, they must develop evaluation practices that provide the most compelling picture of the impact of their services. The two essays in this document present clear arguments for the adoption of a specific approach to evaluation known as outcome-based evaluation. They define a system of evaluation that replaces the question, "What have we done to accomplish our goals?" with the question "What has changed as a result of our work?" Taking their lead from evaluation practices adopted by the United Way in 1995, both authors suggest practices that focus on measuring the effects of an institution's work on its public (outcomes) rather than on the service provided (outputs). The first essay, "Transformed from a Cemetery of Bric-a-brac..." (Stephen E. Weil) describes the "second revolution" that is taking place in the American museum and the shift in focus on the collection as sole resource to the provision of a range of educational and other services available to be used for the accomplishment of a larger public purpose. The essay examines misconceptions and consequences that have emerged as museums cope with this second revolution. The second essay, "Documenting the Difference: Demonstrating the Value of Libraries through Outcome Measurement" (Peggy D. Rudd) describes the United Way's outcome measurement model, illustrating its usefulness for the library setting. In addition to the benefits libraries can gain from outcomes measurement, the essay outlines the potential problems. At the end of the document, a list of selected resources on formal program evaluation methods is provided. (AEF)

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INTRODUCTION

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is a steady champion for the role of museums and libraries in our society. As the primary source of federal funding to libraries and museums, we are frequently called upon to tell their stories and to share the impact of their work as community leaders, educational resources, and guardians of our cultural heritage. Our funding programs support a remarkable range of services, strengthening the ability of museums and libraries to make a true difference in the lives of individuals, families and communities.

Beverly Sheppard

Acting Director, Institute of Museum and Library Services

The work of museums and libraries, however, takes place in an era of increasing demands for accountability. Such demands have already become a legislative reality with the passage of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) in 1993. This requires every government agency to establish specific performance goals for each of its programs, preferably with performance indicators stated in objective, quantifiable, and measurable terms. Agencies must report on their level of achievement in reaching these goals on an annual basis. The effects of GPRA are also trickling down to state and local government agencies that are using the lead of the federal government to require evidence that all public dollars are well spent.

This is not just a government issue. A similar emphasis on accountability is being incorporated into funding guidelines for most major foundations. From all sides, museums and libraries

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are receiving a clear message. If they are to compete for both public and private funds in an accountability-driven environment, they must develop evaluation practices that provide the most compelling picture of the impact of their services.

In the following two essays, Stephen Weil and Peggy Rudd present clear arguments for the adoption of a specific approach to evaluation known as outcome-based evaluation. They define a system of evaluation that replaces the question, "What have we done to accomplish our goals?" with the question "What has changed as a result of our work?" Taking their lead from evaluation practices adopted by the United Way in 1995, both writers suggest practices that focus on measuring the effects of an institution's work on its public (outcomes) rather than on the services provided (outputs).

The Institute of Museum and Library Services shares both authors' conviction that outcomes-based evaluation holds great promise for museums and libraries. As a systematic measurement of impact, it may be employed at many intervals during and after the delivery of service, providing short, and long-term indications of a project's effectiveness. Outcome-based evaluation is not pure research, nor is it simple data collection. It joins both of those essential processes, however, as a powerful tool in reporting the kinds of differences museums and libraries make among their users. It helps both institutions identify their successes and share their stories with a wide range of stakeholders.

Outcome-based evaluation is also a highly useful management tool. It does not occur within a vacuum, but is part of the core process of project development. Program planning, implementation, and evaluation are all parts of the whole that is driven by an institution's purpose and vision. Evaluation provides the critical feedback that tells what is working, what must be changed, and how a program may be improved. It helps inform difficult decisions. Realigning staff or reallocating financial resources are far more palatable when supported by evidence that these investments are making a difference. Well-designed evaluation further enables advocacy and partnership. Good stories become convincing and forge the basis for ongoing funding, support, and collaboration.

As both authors concur, good evaluation methodology is a challenge. Ambivalence toward evaluation is widely recognized and shared by many professional leaders. It requires commitment, regular practice, and an investment in training and resources. In addition, both museums and libraries raise questions about how they can measure what may be a long-term benefit or best told through an individual narrative. They suggest that objective, quantifiable measures are often counter to their work.

Despite these concerns, however, if museums and libraries do not take the responsibility for developing their own set of credible indicators, they risk having someone else do it for them. The loss would be very great if funders or others outside the museum and library fields imposed an arbitrary set of standards to be measured. Museums and libraries would lose an important opportunity to learn through their work and to guide their own future.

IMLS is especially pleased to offer this publication as part of our support and encouragement for the adoption of outcome-based evaluation in the library and museum fields. Through our grants and awards, IMLS has supported the idea that museums and libraries have a profound capacity to make a difference in their communities. Now, in our support of outcome-based evaluation as a valuable methodology, we are committed to documenting their impact and telling their stories more widely.

We thank both Stephen Weil and Peggy Rudd for their wisdom and their generosity in sharing their essays for this purpose.

from a Cem
of B

Stephen E. Weil

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Distinct reVOLUTIONS

Among the perennially favorite stories in my country is Washington Irving's tale of Rip Van Winkle, the amiable New York farmer who fell into a profound sleep as a loyal subject of King George III and—waking up some 20 years later—was astonished to find that he had meanwhile become a citizen of an entirely new country called the United States of America. What had happened while he slept, of course, was a revolution. If we could shift that frame just slightly and conjure up instead an old-fashioned curator in a New York museum—a sort of tweedy Rip Van Recluse—who dozed off at his desk some 50 years ago and woke up only today, would his astonishment at the museum in which he found himself be any the less? I think not.

During the past 50 years there have been not just one but two distinct revolutions in the American museum. The first—a revolution specific to the museum—was in its focus.

This paper was first delivered as a keynote address for the 1999 British Museum Annual Meeting.

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When Rip Van Recluse began his long sleep, the American museum, just as it had been since early in the century, was still oriented primarily inward on the growth, care, study, and display of its collection. By the time he awoke, though, that focus had been completely reversed. The museum in which he found himself was now an outwardly oriented organization engaged primarily in providing a range of educational and other services to its visitors and, beyond its visitors, to its commupity. The collection, once its *raison d'etre*, was now, instead, simply one of a number of resources available to be used for the accomplishment of a larger public purpose.

This change of focus, as Rip would quickly discover, was in no way peculiar to the American museum. Common virtually everywhere today is the conviction that public service is central to what a museum is all about. How that is expressed may differ from one country to another, but almost nowhere is there anybody now left who still believes—as did many of Rip's colleagues before his long sleep—that the museum is its own excuse for being. As Kenneth Hudson recently pointed out in the 50th anniversary issue of the UNESCO magazine *Museum Interna-tional*: "...[T]he most fund- amental change that has affected museums during the [past] half-century...is the now almost universal conviction that they exist in order to serve the public. The old-style museum felt itself under no such obligation. It existed, it had a building, it had collections and a staff to look after them, it was reasonably adequately financed, and its visitors, not usually nuerous, came to look, to wonder, and to admire what was set before them. They were in no sense partners in the enterprise. The museum's prime responsibility was to its collections, not to its visitors."

The second revolution—a revolution that is still in progress—is considerably more complicated. By no means specific to museums, it is a revolution rag-ing across the entire not-for-profit or so-called third sector of American society—that sprawling conglomeration of more than one million privately-governed cultural, educational, religious, health care and social service organizations to which most American museums belong. Whereas the first revolution involved a change in institutional focus, this second revolution has to do with public expectations.

At its core is a growing expectation that, in the discharge of its public service obligations, every not-for-profit organization will carry out its particular work not only with integrity but with a high degree of competence as well and, moreover, that it will employ that competence to achieve an outcome that—regardless of what kind of a not-for-profit organization it may be—will demonstrably enhance the quality of individual lives and/or the well-being of some particular community. Under the pressure of this second revolution, what had once in the United States been a landscape dotted with volunteer-dominated and often amateurishly managed charities—the realm of stereotypical bumbling vicars,

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fluttering chairladies, and absent-minded professors—is today being transformed into a dynamic system of social enterprises, a system in which the ultimate institutional success or failure of each constituent enterprise is to be judged by its capacity to articulate the particular results it is seeking to achieve and by its ability, in day-to-day practice, actually to achieve the results it has so articulated.

To translate that second revolution into museum terms: the institution in which Rip Van Recluse fell asleep was generally regarded as an essentially benevolent or philanthropic one. It was imbued with a generous spirit, its supporters were honorable, and worthy people, and it was, above all, respectable. During the years that Rip slept, other ways of looking at the American museum began to surface. For some observers, resources replaced respectability as the measure of a museum—a good museum, in their view, was one with a fine collection, an excellent staff, an impressive building, and a solid endowment. For others a museum was better measured not by what resources it had but by what it did with those resources—by its programming. For still others it was processes and procedures that mattered—what made a museum admirable was its mastery of museological techniques, that it knew how to do things "by the book." With the coming of this second revolution, however, all of those other measures are today being subsumed into two overarching concerns. These are, first, that the museum has the competence to achieve the outcomes to which it aspires—outcomes that will positively affect the quality of individual and communal lives—and, second, that the museum employs its competence in such a way as to assure that such outcomes, in fact, are demonstrably being achieved on some consistent basis.

Among the forces driving this second revolution have been the emergence, primarily in the graduate schools of business, of a new organizational concept—the "social enterprise"—as well as the recent implementation, at an everyday working level, of several new modes of organizational assessment. Among the most forceful proponents of the social enterprise concept is Professor J. Gregory Dees, formerly of the Harvard Business School and now at Stanford. As envisioned by Dees, a not-for-profit organization (which he calls a "social enterprise") and a for-profit business (which he refers to as a "commercial enterprise") can best be understood as being basically similar organizations that principally differ only (1) in the nature of the bottom lines that they pursue, (2) in how they price the products and/or services that they distribute and, (3) in how they acquire replacement resources to make up for those depleted through distribution.

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In terms of the bottom line, the commercial enterprise's ultimate operational objective is a positive economic outcome, *i.e.*, a profit. By contrast, the ultimate operational objective for the social enterprise—its bottom line—is a positive social outcome. That difference notwithstanding, Dees argues that these two forms of enterprise's are still more similar than different—each employing managerial skills to produce a bottom line result by adding value to the resources which they acquire and process. To think of a museum as "entrepreneurial" in that sense is by no means unprecedented. To

possess that particular ability—"...knowing how to invest time and money in anticipation of a return greater than the investment"—is exactly, for example, how Leon Paroissien defined entrepreneurship when he was director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney.

The second major difference between these forms of enterprise involves pricing. The commercial enterprise traditionally distributes its products and/or services at a market-determined price. By contrast, the social enterprise most frequently distributes its products and/or services either without charge or at less than their true cost. Dees again argues that this does not change their basic similarity.

It simply has implications for the third difference between them—how the social enterprise must acquire replacement resources. Unlike the commercial enterprise which has the capacity to buy what it needs in order to be productive, the social enterprise may be dependent in whole or in part upon contributed goods, funds or services. In most operational respects, however, the social enterprise is still conceptually parallel with the commercial one. "Managing for results"—to use a Canadian phrase—is no less essential to one form of enterprise than to the other.

As this theoretical model was being polished in the business schools, a complementary group of ideas was finding practical expression in the workplace. Two instances are noteworthy here: the adoption of new evaluation practices in 1995 by the United Way of America and the passage by the United States Congress of the Government Performance and Results Act in 1993.

Two instances are noteworthy here: the adoption of new evaluation practices in 1995 by the United Way of America and the passage by the United States Congress of the Government Performance and Results Act in 1993.

For those not familiar with the United Way, a brief description may be in order. Originally organized as the Community Chest movement, the United Way is perhaps the largest and certainly one of the most influential not-for-profit undertakings in the United States. A federation of some 1,400 community-based fund-raising organizations that derive roughly 70% of their contributed income from direct payroll deductions, it collected some $3.5 billion dollars in its most recent reporting year. That money, in turn, is then distributed to literally tens of thousands of local organizations throughout each community. Although each United Way chapter has full autonomy to determine how its share of this immense pool of money will be distributed, uniform standards are set by a National Office in Alexandria, Virginia. In 1995, that National Office officially announced a radical change in those standards.

Previously, United Way had based its funding decisions on an evaluation of its applicants' programs. If an organization applied to a United Way chapter for funding an adult literacy program, for example, the criteria for making or denying that grant would have been based on such program-related questions as whether the curriculum was soundly conceived, whether the instructors were well qualified, and whether the proposed classroom materials were appropriate for the expected participants. No longer, said

United Way in 1995. Henceforth the focus would be on the recipients of services, not their providers. Henceforth the test would be outcomes, results, program performance. By what percentage had the reading scores of those participants improved? How did that improvement compare with the improvement recorded in earlier years? How did it compare with the record of other literacy programs in similar circumstances? Put bluntly: neither was the program well-designed nor highly regarded but...DID IT REALLY WORK?

Central to this new United Way approach were such concepts as "change" and "difference." A 1996 publication suggested how flexibly those concepts could be applied without violating the boundaries of what might still might be strictly defined as outcomes. "Outcomes," it said: "...are benefits or changes for individuals or populations during or after participating in program activities. They are influenced by a program's outputs. Outcomes may relate to knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, behavior, condition, or other attributes. They are what participants know, think, or can do; or how they behave; or what their condition is, that is different following the program."

Although United Way's funding is primarily directed toward social service agencies, its full-scale embrace of outcome-based evaluation has nevertheless had a pervasive influence throughout the entire American funding community: among foundations, corporate donors, and government agencies. To a greater degree than ever, funders are asking applicants of every kind—cultural organizations as well as social service agencies and health services—detailed questions about just what outcomes they hope or realistically expect to achieve through a proposed program and about just how they intend to determine whether or not those particular outcomes have, in fact, been achieved.

Meanwhile, that identical question—just precisely what is it that you hope or expect to accomplish with the funds for which you are asking—will be formally posed on an annual basis to every agency of the United States federal government beginning in the year 2000. Under the Government Performance and Results Act or GPRA—legislation that was scarcely noticed when it was passed on a bipartisan basis in 1993 but which is now beginning to loom very large as its effective date in 2000 approaches—each such agency will be responsible, first, for establishing—preferably in objective, quantifiable and measurable terms—specific performance goals for every one of its programs and, second, for thereafter reporting annually to the Congress on its success or lack of success in meeting those goals.

Under the Government Performance and Results Act or GPRA...each such agency will be responsible, first, for establishing—preferably in objective, quantifiable and measurable terms—specific performance goals for every one of its programs and, second, for thereafter reporting annually to the Congress on its success or lack of success in meeting those goals.

In essence, GPRA will raise the level of public accountability to a new height. Prior to GPRA, United States government agencies were already responsible under earlier legislation for controlling fraud and abuse. Professor Peter Swords of the Columbia University Law School has referred to this lower level of scrutiny as "negative accountability"—making sure that nobody was doing anything wrong. With GPRA, however, government will be ratcheting itself up a notch to what Swords has, by contrast, called "positive accountability"—making sure that government programs actually work to achieve their intended outcomes, making sure that federal money is not only being spent honestly but also that it is being spent effectively.

Although this enhanced standard of accountability will only affect a handful of museums directly, it is virtually certain to serve as a model for various state,

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county and municipal governments and for some private funding sources as well. In confluence with the other forces driving this second revolution, the implementation of such standards is radically changing the climate in which American not-for-profit organizations—museums included—operate. This new climate is a distinctly more hard-nosed one, far reduced in the traditional trust and leniency that not-for-profit organizations enjoyed when yesterday's public still looked upon them as genteel charities, and correspondingly higher in the degree of accountability on which today's public now insists.

Nothing on the horizon suggests that this climate is likely to change or that what we are witnessing is merely some cyclical phenomenon, something to be survived until museums can once again hunker down around their collections. In earlier and more trusting days, the museum survived on a kind of faith: faith that it was *per se* an important kind of institution, faith that its mere presence in a community would somehow enhance the well-being of that community. The second revolution has undermined that faith by posing questions about competence and purpose that, like genies released from a bottle, cannot readily be corked up again. To repeat an observation I made at another conference just two years ago:

"If our museums are not being operated with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of people's lives, on what [other] basis might we possibly ask for public support? Not, certainly, on the grounds that we need museums in order that museum professionals might have an opportunity to develop their skills and advance their careers, or so that those of us who enjoy museum work will have a place in which to do it. Not, certainly, on the grounds that they provide elegant venues for openings, receptions and other glamorous social events. Nor is it likely that we could successfully argue that museums...deserve to be supported simply as an established tradition, as a kind of ongoing habit, long after any good reasons to do so have ceased to be relevent or have long been forgotten."

"If our museums are not being operated with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of people's lives, on what [other] basis might we possibly ask for public support?"

As museums in the United States seek to cope with this second revolution, a number of misconceptions have emerged. For one, many American museum workers seem to believe that what is primarily being asked of them is that they become more efficient, that they adopt some set of "lean and mean" practices from the business sector that would enable them and their museums to achieve a more positive and self-supporting economic bottom line. Although nobody, certainly, is condoning inefficiency in museums, the goal that the proponents of social enterprise theory, the United Way and GPRA, are each in their own way pursuing is not merely efficiency but something far more difficult to attain and considerably more important as well: effectiveness.

In this context, the distinction between efficiency and effectiveness is critical. Efficiency is a measure of cost. Effectiveness is a measure of outcome. Efficiency describes the relationship between a program's outcome and the resources expended to achieve that outcome.

Efficiency is clearly important—the more efficient an organization, the more outcome it can generate from the same expenditure of resources —but it is always subsidiary to effectiveness. What effectiveness describes is the relationship between a program's out-

come and the expectation with which that program was undertaken in the first place. Effectiveness is the measure of DID IT REALLY WORK? In the for-profit commercial enterprise, there is a substantial overlap between efficiency and effectiveness. Waste can undermine profit, the basic point of the enterprise. Not so in the social enterprise, where efficiency and effectiveness remain distinct. A museum might conceivably be effective without necessarily being efficient.

A related misconception is that the pursuit of effectiveness is somehow analogous to benchmarking. Benchmarking—as that term is generally used in the United States—is about something else: an effort to improve how you perform a particular task by seeking out the most exemplary practice in some other organization with the intention, so far as may be practical, of then adopting that practice for yourself. Specific procedures within a museum—making timely payment to vendors, performing a conservation survey, processing outgoing loans—can certainly be approached in this way, but scarcely ever could the overall operation of the museum itself be benchmarked. Museums are so extraordinarily varied in their origin, discipline, scale, governance, collections, sources of funding, endowment, staffing, facilities, and community setting that one can hardly serve as a model or even the basis of any meaningful comparison for another. That is particularly the case with respect to effectiveness. A museum's effectiveness can only be determined in relationship to what it is trying to accomplish—not in terms of what some other museum is trying to accomplish.

Finally, there are those who think that what is being asked of American museums by these combined revolutions is something wholly novel or unprecedented. From almost its very beginning, however, the mainstream museum movement in the United States has had running beside it a slender but vigorous alternative movement—a kind of counter-current—that envisioned the museum not in terms of such inward activities as the accumulation and care and study of its collections but, rather, in terms of what impact it might have on its community. In fact, America's two great flagship art museums—the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, both founded in 1870—were originally modeled on the South Kensington Museum and intended from their inception to be primarily educational in nature. It was only between the years 1905 and 1910, that they refocused their primary attention on collecting original, often unique, works of fine art. For more than a century, many of the most eloquent voices within the American museum community have argued strenuously for the outwardly directed and publicly accountable museum. Here, for example, is how George Brown Goode—an early Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian—made the case during a lecture at the Brooklyn Institute in 1889:

Efficiency is a measure of cost. Effectiveness is a measure of outcome. Efficiency describes the relationship between a program's outcome and the resources expended to achieve that outcome. Efficiency is clearly important—the more efficient an organization, the more outcome it can generate from the same expenditure of resources—but it is always subsidiary to effectiveness. What effectiveness describes is the relationship between a program's outcome and the expectation with which that program was undertaken in the first place. Effectiveness is the measure of DID IT REALLY WORK?

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"The museum of the past must be set aside, reconstructed, transformed from a cemetery of bric-a-brac into a nursery of living thoughts. The museum of the future must stand side by side with the library and the laboratory, as part of the teaching equipment of the college and university, and in the great cities cooperate with the public library as one of the principal agencies for the enlightenment of the people."

Nobody has made these arguments more pungently, however, than John Cotton Dana, the early champion of community museums and the founder, in the early 1900s, of one of America's most notable examples: the Newark Museum. In a 1917 essay, written as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and other East Coast museums were accelerating their quest for the previously unobtainable works of fine art flowing out of Europe, Dana was scornful of what he called "marble palaces filled with those so-called emblems of culture, rare and costly and wonder-working objects." Such museums, the kinds of museums, he said, "which kings, princes, and other masters of people and wealth had constructed" would give the common people neither pleasure nor profit. Nor could such museums accomplish what Dana took to be the first and obvious task of every museum: "adding to the happiness, wisdom, and comfort of members of the community."

Most remarkably of all, Dana understood as early as 1920 that the public's support of a museum was at bottom an exchange transaction—that it, the public, was due a measure of value in return. Moreover, he foresaw that some type of positive accountability would be required in order to assure the public that the museum was actually providing such value.

"All public institutions (and museums are not exceptions to this rule) should give returns for their cost; and those returns should be in good degree positive, definite, visible, measurable. The goodness of a museum is not in direct ratio to the cost of its building and the upkeep thereof, or to the rarity, auction value, or money cost of its collections. A museum is good only insofar as it is of use....Common sense demands that a publicly supported institution do something for its supporters and that some part at least of what it does be capable of clear description and downright valuation."

In a sense, this once alternative movement, this counter-current, is now in the course of itself becoming the mainstream. Astonishing as the concept of the museum as a positively accountable public service organization may be to the newly awoken Rip Van Recluse, that concept does, in fact, have deep roots in the American museum tradition.

Moving on, then, I want to turn to what seem to me some of the major consequences that these two revolutions may potentially have for American museums. Five seem particularly noteworthy. The first pertains to disciplinarity. According to the last survey data—unfortunately, not very recent—only 15% or so of American museums are truly interdisciplinary. That 15% includes children's museums—today the fastest growing segment of the American museum community—and general museums. The remaining 85% are closely tied to one or another academic specialty. When collections were central to a mus-eum's concerns, that kind of specialization—albeit something of a straightjacket—might have made a certain amount of sense. It makes much less sense today, though, as the museum's focus shifts toward public service. And it makes no sense whatsoever in those many small American communities that may have only a single museum, or even two.

In this new environment,

For more than a century, many of the most eloquent voices within the American museum community have argued strenuously for the outwardly directed and publicly accountable museum.

As the museum redefines its central purpose from inward to outward—from amassing a collection to providing a public service—it finds itself being drawn into collaboration with, or at times even exchanging functions with, a broad range of other community-based service organizations whose purposes are similar.

museums should better be able to liberate themselves from these disciplinary constraints and to broaden the range of their programming even to the extent of blurring if not actually breaking down the traditional boundaries between disciplines. In that regard, a revival of John Cotton Dana's case for the community museum could not be more timely. For Dana, the proper way to shape a museum's program was not by recourse to some academic discipline—art, history, or natural science—but through an ongoing conversation with the community. "Learn what aid the community needs," he said, and "fit the museum to those needs."

A second—and related—consequence pertains to a blurring of boundaries around the museum field itself. When the museum's principal activities were the highly specialized ones of accumulating, preserving, and displaying a collection—activities virtually unique to the museum—it tended to do its work more or less in isolation and alone. Not so today. As the museum redefines its central purpose from inward to outward—from amassing a collection to providing a public service—it finds itself being drawn into collaboration with, or at times even exchanging functions with, a broad range of other community-based service organizations whose purposes are similar. To some extent, the museum's submergence in these new relationships and/or its assumption of new and nontraditional roles can blur its once clear identity. Whatever loss that might entail, however, may be more than compensated for by the increase in effectiveness it can thereby achieve. Here, I think, our American experience in working collaboratively is very much in accord with the British experience as described in *A Common Wealth*, David Anderson's 1997 report to the Department of National Heritage:

"Partnerships allow museums to extend the boundaries of what is possible: to share risks, acquire resources, reach new audiences, obtain complementary skills, improve the quality of service, achieve projects that would have otherwise been impossible, acquire validation from an external source, and win community and political support."

A third consequence—one that our time-traveller Rip Van Recluse may not find so congenial—is internal. It pertains to how museums are staffed and how their operating budgets allocated. When collections were at the core of the museum's concern, the role played by those in charge of the collection—keepers in your country, curators in mine—was dominant. In American museums, curators were literally the resident princes. With the evolution of the outwardly-focused, public-service museum, curators have been forced to share some part of their authority with a range of other specialists: first with museum educators, and more recently with exhibition planners, with public programmers, and even with marketing and media specialists. As with their authority, so with their budgets. As the museum's focus is redirected outward, an increasing share of its operating costs, particularly salaries, must concurrently be diverted away from the acquisition, study and care of collections and toward other functions. In many American museums this has sometimes been a bumpy transition—power is not always relinquished graciously, even by otherwise gracious museum people—and one with still some distance to go.

The fourth of these consequences also has budgetary consequences. It is the urgent need for museums to develop and implement new assessment techniques by which to evaluate the overall impact of their programs on both individuals and communities. Not only will this be expensive, but museums also begin with a tremendous handicap. Because outcome-based evaluation has its roots in the social service area where results can usually be quantified, this kind of evaluation presents particular problems not only to museums

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but also to certain other public service organizations—religious bodies, liberal arts colleges, environmental lobbyists—whose program outcomes may not be readily susceptible to statistical or other measurement.

In contrast, for example, to a drug rehabilitation program or a prenatal nutrition program—both of which might produce clearly measurable outcomes within less than a year—the impact of a museum tends to be subtle, indirect, frequently cumulative over time, and often intertwined with the impacts of such other sources of formal and informal educational experiences as schools, churches and various social and affinity groups. Museums will not only have to educate themselves as to how their impact can be captured and described. They will also have to educate those to whom they may be accountable as to what may and may not be possible in rendering their accounts. Daunting as those tasks may be, they will be essential. It is precisely because the value of what a museum can add to a community's well-being may not be as self-evident as is that provided by the drug or prenatal program that developing a credible means to report that value is so important.

The fifth and final of these consequences is—to my mind—the most critical. It concerns the need to define institutional purposes more clearly and, having once defined them, to make those purposes the consistent backbone of every activity that the museum undertakes. The logic here is basic. Under the impact of these two revolutions, institutional effectiveness will be the key to continued public support. In the absence of some clear sense of what a museum intends to achieve, however, it is simply impossible to assess its effectiveness—impossible to evaluate how its actual achievements compare with its int-ended ones. That a clear sense of purpose was basic to a museum's organizational well-being was something already understood—if only instinctively—by the early proponents

Museums will not only have to educate themselves as to how their impact can be captured and described. They will also have to educate those to whom they may be accountable as to what may and may not be possible in their accounts.

of the outwardly-directed museum. In a paper presented to the British museums association when it met in Newcastle back in 1895, the Smithsonian's George Brown Goode made that very point. "Lack of purpose in museum work," he said, "leads in a most conspicuous way to a waste of effort and to partial or complete failure."

One source of difficulty for American museums has been a tendency to confuse museum purposes with museum functions. In the book on mission statements that Gail Anderson edited for the American Association of Museums this past year, she points out that there is no way in which a museum that describes its intentions solely in terms of the activities it plans to undertake—that it will collect, preserve, and interpret X or Y or Z—can be qualitatively evaluated. In the absence of any sense of just what it hopes to accomplish and whom it hopes to benefit through those activities, such a museum simply appears to be spinning in space with no goal, perhaps, but its own survival. This is where Rip Van Recluse might find himself most particularly puzzled. When he fell asleep in his museum all those years ago, its purpose wasn't a question. In the mainstream formulation, a museum didn't need a reason to be. It just was. No more. This second revolution is establishing purpose as every institution's starting point—the first premise from which every institutional argument must hereafter proceed.

When we finally do turn, then, to see what the possible purposes of museum might be, what we find shining through is the incomparable richness of this field in which we work. In the range of purposes that they can pursue—in the range of the community needs which they can meet: educational needs and spiritual ones, social and physical needs, psychological and economic ones—museums are

among the most remarkably flexible organizational types that a modern society has available for its use. Museums can provide forms of public service that are all but infinite in their variety. Museums can inspire individual achievement in the arts and in science, they can serve to streng-then family and other personal ties, they can help communities to achieve and maintain social stability, they can act as advocates or play the role of mediator, they can inspire respect for the natural environment, they can generate self-respect and mutual respect, they can provide safe environments for self-exploration, they can be sites for informal learning, and ever so much more. In every realm, museums can truly serve as places to remember, as places to discover, as places to imagine.

Back in 1978, the American Association of Museums elected Dr. Kenneth Starr, then the head of the Milwaukee Public Museum, as its President. Earlier in his career, Starr had been a scholar of Chinese art and, almost invariably in the course of a public address, he would remind his listeners that the Chinese ideogram for crisis was a combination of the symbols for danger and opportunity. If these revolutions at which we have been looking—from an inwardly focused museum to an externally focused one, from a museum whose worth might be accepted on faith to one required to demonstrate its competence and render a positive account of its achievements—if these revolutions can in any sense be thought to have triggered a crisis, then we might well conclude by asking the two relevent questions in every crisis: Where is the danger? Where is the opportunity?

For the American museum, I think, the danger is that it may slide back into its old Rip Van Recluse collection-centered ways and thereby render itself irrelevant. In our American system of third-sector privately-governed not-for-profit organizations, there are no safety nets for worn-out institutions. Museums can fail, and they will fail if and when nobody wants to support them any longer. And the opportunity? The opportunity, I think, is for the museum to seize this moment—to use it, first, as the occasion to think through and clarify its institutional purposes and then, second, to go on from there to develop the solid managerial techniques and strategies that will assure its ability to accomplish those purposes in a demonstrable and consistent way.

Before he fell asleep, Rip Van Recluse may well have felt some pride about the good place in which he worked, the important people who supported it, perhaps even about its fine collection and imposing building. Today, though, two revolutions later, the pride that we, as museum workers, can take is of a different and, I think, a higher order. It is the pride of being associated with an enterprise that has so profound a capacity to make a positive difference in the quality of individual lives, an enterprise that can—in so many significant ways and in so many remarkably different ways—enrich the common well-being of our communities. Those are the possibilities that these two revolutions have released to us. It's up to us now to make the most of them.

The fifth and final of these consequence is the most critical. It concerns the need to define institutional purposes more clearly and, having once defined them, making those purposes the consistent backbone of every activity that the museum undertakes.

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Documenting the Differerence:

Demonstrating the Value of Libraries Through Outcome Measurement

By Peggy D. Rudd

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For those of us who work in libraries, who educate those who work in them and who use and support them in a variety of ways, the value of libraries goes without saying. We believe they are a public good. We believe that libraries positively influence student achievement, contribute to the corporate bottom line, fuel research, support community development, improve the quality of life, further education from cradle to grave and contribute to personal betterment. We've long held that one of the best investments of public funds is in libraries and that the key to personal improvement and success is a library card. But no matter how fervent our beliefs about the value of libraries, our belief system offers the weakest of responses when presented with the classic evaluation question: What difference does it make?

What difference does it MAKE?

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For many years, academic, school, and public libraries have contributed to data-gathering efforts administered by the National Center for Education Statistics. Libraries collect and report a variety of data to meet specific needs: to respond to surveys, to prepare annual reports, to measure progress toward objectives, to assess the extent to which the library meets standards, to support long-range planning and budgeting, etc. Librarians have also become increasingly adept at measuring programs and services through inputs (resources) and outputs (products). Basic "counting up" processes (*e.g.*, circulation, library visits, program attendance) have been fine-tuned by drawing relationships between outputs and other variables (*e.g.*, circulation *per capita*, collection turnover rate, registration as a percent of population). But these current kinds and levels of measurement are insufficient to enable librarians to answer this larger question: What is the impact on program participants and service recipients?

Further, as library programs and services continue to evolve, the staples of our measurement system reveal their inadequacies. In a world in which virtual library visits are as important as door counts, electronic documents retrieved are as numerous as circulation and on-line information literacy tutorials are replacing face-to-face bibliographic instruction, measurement must reflect the new order. Even as the "counting up" processes evolve to match the new shape of library programs and services, the question of results remains.

We believe that libraries have a profound impact on individuals, institutions, and communities. How can we engineer a measurement system that will verify our intuition?

How can we move beyond the current system of measurement to get at the very heart of the purpose and value of libraries captured in American Library Association slogan, "Libraries Change Lives"? We believe that libraries have a profound impact on individuals, institutions and communities. How can we engineer a measurement system that will verify our intuition? In my view, we must measure outcomes.

The interest in verifying impact and achieving results does not stem merely from an attempt to better understand the effect of library programs and services on users. Nationwide, program performance and results-based planning, budgeting and public reporting are becoming the norm. A growing number of states, counties and cities are adopting new planning and budgeting processes that focus on accountability and closely link the allocation of resources with direct impact on people served. This change in government focus is being fueled by public sentiment: voters want their elected officials to find some other way to solve problems than simply asking them to pay higher taxes. Taxpayers are becoming increasingly reluctant to accept the status quo.

With the passage of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) in 1993, the huge federal bureaucracy began to move toward an outcome-oriented structure for service delivery and assessment. Among the purposes of GPRA are these: (1) to "improve the confidence of the American people in the capability of the Federal Government, by systematically holding Federal agencies accountable for achieving program results" and (2) to "improve Federal program effectiveness and public accountability by promoting a new focus on results, service quality, and customer satisfaction."

In growing numbers, service providers, governments, other funders and the public are calling for clearer evidence that the resources they expend actually produce benefits for people.

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With expectations for accountability rising and resources being squeezed between demands for reduced taxes and needs for increased services, librarians must be able to demonstrate the difference programs make by measuring the impact they have on the people they serve.

The United Way of America has lead the movement toward outcome measurement through a project aimed at gradually bringing all human service agencies and organizations which receive United Way funding into compliance with outcome measurement. It should be noted that the United Way outcome model was crafted with input from a task force that represented local United Ways, national human service organizations, foundations, corporations, and academic and research institutions. In addition, program directors from twenty-three national health, human service, and child and family service organizations provided input. The model was tested by local human service organizations and their experience thoroughly reviewed with an eye to improving the process.

The interest in verifying impact and achieving results does not stem merely from an attempt to better understand the effect of library programs and services on users. Nationwide, program performance and results-based planning, budgeting, and public reporting are becoming the norm.

The prime motivation for this coordinated effort is best expressed in the article by J. Gregory Dees cited by Stephen Weil. In "Enterprising Nonprofits" Dees speaks to the very core of accountability and outcome measurement: "In an ideal world, social enterprises would receive funding and attract resources only when they produced their intended social impact—such as alleviating poverty in a given area, reducing drug abuse, delivering high-quality education, or conserving natural resources."

Although Dees is referring specifically to nonprofit social enterprises, his link between resources and the success of mission-related activities is especially important. In the library world, links have traditionally been made between resources and outputs. As long as populations to be served were growing, circulation was increasing, and reference questions continued rising, requesting increased resources to handle the challenge of increasing outputs made sense. Further, libraries have long occupied a place of respect within those democratic traditions that are uniquely American. So, requiring proof of results is seen by some as a frontal assault on a good and worthy institution that should not have to justify itself. "Doing good deeds" is justification enough. While there was a time when that argument might have been sufficient, today that is no longer the case.

In order to judge the usefulness of the outcomes model in a library setting, it is first important to understand the model itself. It is also important to understand precisely what is meant by the term "outcome," which has a very particular meaning here. At the heart of the process is the construction of a logic model, a diagram of how a program

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works theoretically. The logic model is a self-contained description of the components of the program. Numerous variations of the model have evolved, but for United Way, these include:

Inputs—Resources dedicated to or consumed by a program (*e.g.*, money, staff, volunteers, facilities, library materials, equipment).

Activities—What the program does with the inputs to fulfill its mission (*e.g.*, conduct story times, after-school homework clinics, summer reading programs, parent education classes, information literacy classes).

Outputs—Direct products of program activities, usually measured in terms of work accomplished (*e.g.*, number of story time attendees, number of students attending after-school homework clinics, number of parent education classes taught, number of children participating in summer reading program, number attending information literacy classes).

Outcomes—Benefits or changes for individuals or populations during or after participating in program activities, including new knowledge, increased skills, changed attitudes or values, modified behavior, improved condition, or altered status (*e.g.*, number of children who learned a finger play during story time, number of parents who indicated that they gained new knowledge or skills as a result of parent education classes, number of students whose grades improved after homework clinics, number of children who maintained reading skills over the summer as a result of a summer reading program, number of people who report being better able to access and use networked information after attending information literacy classes).

While outcome measurement may at first seem very different from the traditional program or service model, in fact it incorporates all of the elements of traditional library measurement (inputs, activities, outputs) while adding only the element of outcomes. Clearly, outcomes can be a powerful tool for planning and improving programs and services. Demonstrating the effectiveness of programs and services can benefit a library in the following ways:

- Outcomes can be a powerful tool for communucating program and service benefits to the community.
- Outcomes can be a powerful tool for demonstrating accountability and justifying funding needs to funders and resource allocators.
- Outcomes can be a tool for building partnerships and promoting community collabortions.
- Outcomes can help determine which programs and sevices should be expanded or replicated.
- Outcomes can be a tool for singling out exemplary programs and services for recognition.

Even though the United Way model was designed specifically for health and human services

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organizations and agencies, it is highly transferable to the library environment. The same elements apply: the need is identified, program options for meeting the needs are evaluated, and resources are brought together to implement the option selected. Despite differences in activities for the library and the human service agency, both intend that participants be better off somehow after participating in the program. Although it is necessary to tailor training materials to library activities and provide relevant examples, the fundamentals of the model are entirely applicable to library programs and services.

While libraries can gain many benefits from outcome measurement, some potential problems must be recognized. Evaluation is not a trivial undertaking, and outcome measurement is certainly no exception. It requires staff skill and attention that may be a challenge for smaller libraries. However, the logic model itself can offer some much-needed support. By bringing together on a single page all aspects of a program or service, it becomes a microcosm into which all program elements have been reduced to their essence. The simplicity of the logic model is perhaps its best feature, especially for smaller libraries.

Some librarians fear that their traditional relationship with users may prohibit the kind of user-based reporting and verification that is needed to demonstrate outcomes. One of the great features of libraries is that they serve people indiscriminately. Librarians are very keen on honoring the privacy of users and asking only for information that helps them accurately negotiate a request for assistance. But in order to find out if changes have occurred as a result of participating in a library program or service, it may be necessary to ask for information that is not generally considered relevant to a user's interaction with the library.

Of course, some outcomes can simply be observed. In an earlier example, one possible outcome was that the child learned a new finger play from library story time. This short-term outcome, a new skill, can be observed fairly easily. However, if one wants to know if an literacy program participant has gained employment as a result of the program, or if participation in an after-school homework clinic has helped a middle school student improve grades, more in-depth information will be required. This is not part of the traditional relationship between libraries and their users, which maintains a respectful distance from the purposes of a user's request for information or services.

There is nothing inherent in outcome measurement that would require librarians to violate the code of ethics that governs their relationship with users. Some librarians, however, may see requesting impact information from users as a breech of this code. The focus of the library is on the interaction itself, requiring the library staff member to elicit only as much information as will link the user with the requested information. However, if determining the results of a program will help ensure funding which will then reap benefits for additional users, involving users in voluntary program outcome assessment is a most valuable undertaking and should not be seen as a violation of their right to privacy.

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It is important to realize that one does not have to measure everything all of the time. Outcomes measurement can be applied to selected programs and services. It is recommended that a library start small and apply the model to a contained program that the library staff has great familiarity with, to minimize the slope of the learning curve. It may also be easier to start out applying outcome measurement to only one part of a program. For example, if the library is implementing a family literacy program, it may be more useful to apply the model to the adult literacy portion of the program or to the parent education part of the program. In the United Way vocabulary, these program parts that may be measured independently are called "outcome tracks."

It is also perfectly acceptable to apply outcome measurement to a program one time and to continue to use the results as a basis on which to build long-range plans, budgets, etc. For example, if outcome measurement has demonstrated that 80% of school-age children who participated in the summer reading program maintained their reading skills over the summer, it is not necessary to re-test that finding each summer. Periodic reevaluation is a good idea in order to verify that a long-term program is continuing to have the desired results or outcomes, however, outcome measurement does not have to be done continually.

It is also possible that outcome measurement conducted on a statewide level can provide substantiation for programs implemented in local libraries. If it can be demonstrated at the state level that an early intervention program such as "Born to Read" has significant impact on the lives of parents and their young children, then those results can be used locally to support requests for local government funding or private funding. The transferability of state outcomes to local programs would validate the potential of those local efforts.

What the library can and should claim is that it helps people change in some way. We know this result happens (libraries do change lives!); outcome measurement can help us prove it.

It is important to remember that outcome-based measurement does not imply that the library is claiming sole responsibility for the change in the lives of program participants or service recipients. We all know that influences on human be-havior are far more complex and that changes occur frequently as a result of a great number of factors acting upon an individual. What the library can and should claim is that it has made a significant contribution to helping people change in some way. We know this result happens (libraries do change lives!); outcome measurement can help us prove it.

The United Way logic model features three categories of outcomes: initial, intermediate, and longer-term. Initial outcomes are those benefits or changes that occur during program participation. Intermediate outcomes are those that occur a few months into the program up until a few months after the participant is no longer involved in the program. Longer-term outcomes are those that occur some time after participation in the program. While longer-term outcomes may require the kind of longitudinal study that few libraries are equipped to handle, most lib-raries should be able to track initial and intermediate outcomes fairly easily. Since libraries do not always have long-term relationships with program participants, they may have no effective mechanism for tracking program participants over time. Thus, most libraries will focus on initial and intermediate outcomes more effectively than on longer-term outcomes.

Outcome measures can be a tremendous planning boon for libraries and a guide to resource allocation. Every program has a variety of activities that are conducted as the program is implemented. Through measuring program outcomes, program planners and implementers can learn a great deal about what works and what doesn't work—what activities lead to higher levels of outcome achievement than others. In this way, staff can begin to target resources to those activities that are more effective.

With the support of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, an increasing number of State Library Agencies and recipients of National Leadership Grant awards are beginning to receive training in outcome measurement and encouragement to apply this system of evaluation to programs funded by the federal Library Services and Technology Act. As these agencies and organizations gain experience in applying outcome measurement to library programs, their experiences need to be shared broadly with the library community. Through the knowledge and experience of early adopters, the value of outcome measurement can be tested in a variety of library and program settings and a body of "best practices" can begin to evolve.

Those of us who have committed our life's work to the improvement of libraries are continually frustrated with our lack of ability to effectively "tell the library story." While it would much more convenient if the worth of libraries was simply accepted on faith by university presidents, county commissioners, city managers, and school boards, that is frequently not the case. Outcome measurement has the potential to be a powerful tool to help us substantiate the claims we know to be true about the impact of libraries in our institutions and in our society. Will it be an easy road to travel? No, but it will absolutely be worth the trip!

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RESOURCES

If outcome-based and other formal program evaluation methods are new to your institution, many excellent publications are available to introduce them. This list is offered as a resource, and is not limiting or exclusive. While terminology differs from publication to publication, basic concepts are very similar. With the exception of IMLS's brief introduction, the following resources draw examples from educational and social service settings, but many are readily applicable to typical goals of library and museum programs. Many of the titles below are available at no cost online.

Bond, Sally L., Boyd, Sally E., and Rapp, Kathleen A. (1997). *Taking Stock: A Practical Guide to Evaluating your own Programs.* Chapel Hill, N.C.: Horizon Research, Inc., 111 Cloister Court, Suite 220, Chapel Hill, NC 27514, 919-489-1725 ($25.00, pb). This manual was developed for community-based science education initiatives through funding from the DeWitt Wallace-Readers Digest Fund. Participating advisors included the Association of Science-Technology Centers and the National Science Foundation. Available via Acrobat PDF at <http://www.horizon-research.com/publications/stock.pdf> as of April 17, 2000.

Institute of Museum and Library Services (1999). *Outcome-Based Evaluation for IMLS-Funded Projects for Libraries and Museums.* Contact Karen Motylewski, Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20560, 202-606-5551, e-mail <kmotylewski@imls.gov>. This brief introduction for IMLS grantees and proposers uses examples from library and museum contexts. Available on request in paper or electronic versions.

Mika, Kristine L. (1996). *Program Outcome Evaluation: A Step-by-Step Handbook.* Milwaukee, WI: Families International, Inc., 11700 West Lake Park Drive, Milwaukee, WI 53224 ($13.95, pb).

Project STAR (no date). *Support and Training for Assessing Results.* San Mateo, CA: Project Star, 480 E. 4th Ave., Unit A, San Mateo, CA 94401-3349, 1-800-548-3656. A basic manual for outcome-based evaluation produced by Project STAR under contract to the Corporation for National Service. Available via Rich Text Format or Acrobat PDF at <http://www.projectstar.org/> as of April 17, 2000.

United Way of America. *Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach* (1996). Alexandria, VA: United Way of America, 701 North Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA 22314, 703-836-7100 or <http://www.unitedway.org/outcomes/publctns.htm#It0989> ($5.00, spiral bound, to not-for-profit organizations). Developed by United Way for its grantees, this manual led the movement to outcome-based evaluation by funders of not-for-profit organizations. See <http://www.unitedway.org/outcomes/publctns.htm> for other pertinent United Way publications, some available via Acrobat PDF or Rich Text Format.

W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook (January 1998). Available via Acrobat PDF at < http://www.wkkf.org/Publications/evalhdbk/default.htm> as of April 17, 2000.

PC Magazine has published reviews ("Editor's Choice," February 8, 2000) of software tools for Web-based surveys that some programs may find useful. See <http://www.zdnet.com/pcmag/stories/reviews/0,6755,2417503,00.html> as of April 17, 2000.

Sage Publications, Inc., 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320, 805-499-0721 or <www.sagepub.com> is a commercial publisher that specializes in publications on evaluation and related subjects. They offer many titles that cover aspects of evaluation in detail.

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